

Roanoke River

The Roanoke River is located in northeastern North Carolina where it is the major tributary to Albemarle Sound. The river flows 137 miles from the dam at Roanoke Rapids Lake to Albemarle Sound. This section of river has a width varying between 300-900 feet and offers excellent fishing for striped bass, largemouth bass, hickory shad, sunfish and catfish.

The Roanoke River is the principal spawning stream of the Albemarle Sound population of striped bass. These game fish enter the mouth of the river in March on their annual run up the river to their spawning grounds near Weldon. During March and early April, most anglers fish for the stripers with natural bait on the bottom. The most popular bait is an alewife or blueback herring steak approximately 1-inch thick. Herring gills are also excellent bait, but they must be kept fresh and the hook must be rebaited often. Herring may be purchased from local fish dealers or caught by drifting small mesh gill nets in the run of the river (allowed only downstream of N.C. 285 and subject to Division of Marine Fisheries regulations). In upstream areas, anglers prefer to use 3-5 inch live alewife and blueback herring. Gaston and Roanoke Rapids lakes support large populations of stunted alewives of this size that can be collected with cast and dip nets subject to certain restrictions below the dams during water releases. Striped bass in this area can also be caught on artificial lures that imitate minnows. Flyfishing for stripers has become popular in recent years and several guide services are available during the spring. Be sure to check with the Division of Inland Fisheries office (919) 707-0220 to learn whether the striped bass season is open or closed.

Hickory shad also spawn in the Roanoke River near Weldon just prior to the striped bass spawning run. Peak fishing for hickory shad is during late March and early April and most anglers use shad dart rigs or small spoons. The Roanoke River also offers very good fishing for white perch that run up the river from late March to late May to spawn. As the weather warms and the striped bass and white perch head back downstream to Albemarle Sound, fishing for largemouth bass, sunfish and catfish begins to peak. Fishing for bass peaks in May but may remain good until cool weather slows the action in November. Bluegill are the most abundant species of sunfish, but redear (shellcrackers), redbreast, pumpkinseed and warmouth are also caught fairly frequently. White and channel catfish are caught along the entire length of the river. The mainstem Roanoke River and its tributaries, such as the Cashie River, also offer prime fishing for black crappie in the spring and fall.

Tar/Upper Pamlico River

The Tar River originates in the Piedmont and flows in a southeasterly direction for approximately 195 miles to Washington, where it becomes the Pamlico River. The river averages approximately 50 feet in width and 2-5 feet in depth in the upper reaches, while downstream it averages 160 feet in width and 15 feet in depths. The section of river between Rocky Mount and Old Sparta serves as an important spawning area for anadromous fishes, including American shad, hickory shad, river herring and striped